

Census Tract 21 Profile: Assumptions based on 1990 and 2000 Census Data
And
Field Observation Report

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GEO 340

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28 March 2009

Census Tract 21 of Ingham County is located southeast of the Lansing central business district (CBD) and is mostly residential with some light industry and commercial buildings. The census tract also is home to the Potter Park Zoo which makes up the southern part of the tract which is delineated by the Red Cedar River. I was able to gather this information remotely by use of Google Earth. The data I have gathered from the Census Bureau's website seems to suggest a very diverse working class neighborhood just outside the CBD where the population has changed very little between the 1990 Census numbers and the 2000.

Table 1: Total Population Numbers for Census Tract 21, Ingham County

Year	1990	2000
Total Population	2429	2435

Source: 1 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

The racial make up of the population has changed more noticeably; the percentage of Whites in the tract lost 11 points (of the total population) by the end of the 1990s, and the black population rose 6 points.

Table 2: Racial Make-up of Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
% White	65%	54%
% Black	22%	28%

Source: 2 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

The percent of Latinos in this tract has remained relatively unchanged from 1990 to 2000 with only a dip of 3 points during the 90s.

Table 3: % Hispanic and Latino in Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
% Hispanic or Latino	18%	15%

Source: 3 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

The age characteristics of the tract differ only slightly between each census, but we might be able to see a trend that suggest that younger families with children are replacing the older residents as the percent of persons under 18 has risen and the percent of persons 65 and over has fallen during the 90s. The numbers are not strikingly different and the 2010 Census will be important in seeing if this is an actual trend for this tract.

Table 4: Age Make-up of Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
% Persons aged 18 or >	31%	34%
% Persons aged 65 or <	9%	6%

Source: 4 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Educational attainment for persons 25 and older along with employment status of persons 16 and older, median household income, value of owner occupied houses, and occupational make-up further provide evidence of the working class nature of this particular census tract. In the time between the 1990 and 2000 census, there are no substantial changes that can not be accounted for by normal inflation. Attainment of a degree, associates or higher, rose just 3 points out of the population of persons over 25 to 20% which means that only one in five adults 25 or older have at least an associates degree which is characteristic of a working class neighborhood.

Table 5: Educational Attainment of Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
% of persons 25 or older w/at least an associates degree	17%	20%

Source: 5 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Among men, manufacturing and retail trade were the dominate occupations of the tract. Among women, retail trade and educational services were the leading occupations. Unemployment actually went down in between 1990 and 2000; this might be something to look at in our on foot observation because of the recent economic down turn.

Table 6: Unemployment for Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
% of persons 16 or older in the workforce who are unemployed	9%	6%

Source: 6 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

The relatively low median household income of this census tract increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, but as I said, mostly due to natural inflation. Median value of owner-occupied homes fell behind the pace of increase which income had during the same period as this table shows.

Table 7: Household Income and Home Value in (\$) of Census Tract 21, Ingham Co.

Year	1990	2000
Med. Household Income	20,955	30,601
Med. Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	33,800	41,100

Source: 7 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

I feel that my assumptions about this census tract based on the data and the remote sensing observation should be close to truth. In my experience with a company that I worked for which required me to go door to door, I came across many neighborhoods that were very similar to what this appears to be like and I look forward to talking to some of the people in the area and seeing it at street level.

Observation Report for Census Tract 21

Tract 21 is separated from tract 22 by the Red Cedar River in the south, the northern border is E. Main St. to the Red Cedar, and the western border is Hosmer to Hazel to Pennsylvania if one goes north to south. As I had anticipated, the area was mostly residential with a few commercial and industrial areas. The tract is most notable for containing Potter Park and the Potter Park Zoo that is separated by train tracks from the rest of the tract. Based on the data I gathered from the Census Bureau, I thought that this area would be a zone of decay just outside of the central business district (CBD). At first glance my assumptions seemed to be confirmed, a residential area with poor streets, a foreign owned liquor store, abandoned school, etc., but the longer I stayed in the area the more I realized that the neighborhood was actually pretty nice.

The houses were small and densely situated in most of the residential areas of the tract, but there was room enough for small yards and many of them had small play sets and toys in them like this one (right)



which indicate that there are many families with children. There were also many older residents with well kept gardens and houses. I was amazed at how houses that were so densely packed onto blocks could be so different from each



other as well. A cute little, well-kept house would be right next to a dilapidated house on many of these blocks (left).

People of all ages and races seemed to wander about the side walks freely and there were very few vacant lots or houses.

For instance, this house on the right (blue 3 on the map) was one of only four I came across in my observation. As the neighborhood ran closer to Pennsylvania Ave., the houses and lots got larger, but the quality of the houses did not change much, in fact there were more large older homes that



had been converted to 2 family apartment buildings. One house that stood out in this section of the neighborhood was this house that had a stairway running up the outside onto a deck that was perched over the roof (below, blue 8).



The Hosmer neighborhood on the west side of Pennsylvania was much more like the Potter-Walsh neighborhood. Both were very diverse in age and races with the common theme of working class inhabitants. Just to the

west of the Hosmer neighborhood, and in fact the whole tract were chain linked fenced industrial complexes that seemed to stretch across the southern part of the city; this added to tract 21's working class character. This is a view across Pennsylvania Ave towards the huge stacks south of the CBD (right) and west of tract 21.



I assumed that an area with 2500 people would have a school and a few churches, but I was surprised to find only one church (below left, Blue 4) and one school that was no longer in operation (right, Blue 7).

The Vessels of Life Church, as you can see, is a very small building in the middle of the Potter-Walsh neighborhood and no one I had talked to



attended it. The people I talked to that did go to church, traveled to other churches outside the census tract or across town. The



Holmes Street School is used by the community though. The community website www.holmesstreetschoolcommunity.com describes it like this: "We are the families living near Holmes Street School, a diverse group with one goal: a strong and successful community for our family. We rely on the Holmes Street School's playground and green-space for our children."

Further to the east there is another small park; Walsh Park (right, blue 5) with a basketball court and small playground seemed to be well kept but was not in use by anyone when I drove by a number of times. These two parks seem to be the main parks serving the residents of this census tract. On the other hand, Potter Park which is by far the largest park in the census tract,



taking up the bottom 100 acres, serves the whole of Lansing. When I asked a zoo official about any agreements or partnerships with the surrounding neighborhoods, she told me that the only agreement the Potters had with the community is that the Dakin St. Bridge (below left, Blue 2) was to remain open to foot traffic (it is not deemed safe for vehicle traffic) to the community.



The Potter Park area of the census tract is a world away from the working class neighborhoods and industries that make up the rest of the tract. There are well kept picnic facilities, paved running/bike trails that connect Lansing and East Lansing, and most notably, the Potter Park Zoo (Below, Blue 1). This area is also home to the southern border of the

census tract, the Red Cedar River which was very high at the time of my observation as you can see in this image below.



The commercial and industrial zones of census tract 21 were concentrated in two areas: the Pennsylvania Ave. area around Haco Dr. and to a much lesser extent, E. Main Street along



the northern border of the census tract. The residents in the census tract must use their access to I-496 to take care of their grocery needs, because I did not see any shopping centers even close to the area. The Corner Market (below left, Red 3), which was run by a south Asian family, sold

some grocery items, but is what would be considered a party store rather than a grocery store; also it seemed unusual that it sold custom high-top sneakers among the regular snacks and liquor. On the



corner of Hazel and Pennsylvania there was a small building with a diner and Mexican restaurant (right, Red 2) that probably made most of its business from the factories in that part of the city.

Most of the businesses were concentrated in the block south of Walsh St. on Pennsylvania Ave. to the railroad. This includes a large building called the Penn Building (below left, Red 1, Black 6) that housed a medical clinic and an industrial and construction



supplier. The building stretched back from Pennsylvania along the dead end Haco Dr. that also gave access to a body shop and Fasteners factory (Black 4,5). Along the south side of Haco Dr. was Keystone Automotive (Black 3) which did body work as well, evidenced by a huge pile of fiberglass bumper covers in the

back of the building. The largest building in the census tract belonged to Metalist International

Inc. (Black 2) which was just south of Keystone Automotive going towards the train tracks. Though the building was large, there was no large parking lot and very few vehicles around it which seems to suggest that small teams work on large projects there rather than producing smaller manufactured goods. Just south of this building was an old water works building and then the railroad bridge to the south of that.

Along E. Main in the north, there were a few other examples of the working class character of this census tract. Just north of Walsh Park is a whole block filled with cinder blocks, this is the Martin Concrete Company (right, Black 8) on E. Main. Across from the Corner Market there was also a Sheet Metal Workers (Black 7) union hall as well on E. Main. One place I cannot seem to identify is the area indicated as a pond east of Aurelius



Road. It looks like it is actually a dried up industrial pond (there were old barrels lying in it) or a lime pit because it was hard white crusted earth with algae puddles here and there. The rest of the area east of Aurelius was flooded woods just like in the Potter Park.

There were many features of this census tract that did not surprise me at all when I visited it. The demographics seemed to match up with the census figures and there was not much evidence of growth at all. Most of the houses looked like they were at least 40 years old; some in better shape than others, and the people living in them were for the most part very friendly. There were a few signs of decay in the area, like the potholes, poor side walks, litter, and graffiti along the railroad bridges, but that did not seem to fit the character neighborhood at all. There were also features that did surprise me. I was surprised that there were not many churches in the area. I was surprised that Potter Park did not seem to play any role in the character of the rest of the census tract. I was also surprised that there were relatively few for sale signs or abandoned houses in the area. Most of all, I was surprised that the neighborhood seemed so care free.

There were many unfenced yards with play sets, children walking alone down the side walks, and very few wandering groups of young people. I have had occasion to walk through many of the worst neighborhoods in Michigan when I worked as a solicitor and given the structure of this tract I was expecting something like I have come across in Flint, Saginaw, or Detroit, but it was nothing like those neighborhoods. People just seemed to be settled into a quiet, relaxing, calm in this area which they were happy with. This is the kind of place that if I had to live in city, I would not mind living in.